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POSSIBLE BACTERIAL CONTAMINATION IN THE WITHLACOOCHEE RIVER

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[Madison], FL – Ahead of the holiday weekend, the Florida Department of Health (DOH) is providing a precautionary health update regarding a reported sewage overflow in Valdosta, Georgia, which may impact the Withlacoochee River. This river system flows through the following Florida counties: Madison, Hamilton and Suwannee counties. This spill is estimated to have discharged 127,750 gallons into Sugar Creek in Georgia.

DOH, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Suwannee River Water Management District are coordinating to closely monitor the situation and respond accordingly. We will provide updates to the public as these assessments continue throughout the weekend.

Water contaminated with elevated fecal bacteria presents several health risks to humans. Microbes normally found with fecal bacteria could cause gastrointestinal issues and other conditions.

Until further information is known, residents and visitors in the area should take precautions in the area of Withlacoochee River. Anyone who comes into contact with the river water should wash thoroughly, especially before eating or drinking. Children and older adults, as well as immunocompromised individuals, are particularly vulnerable to disease.

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